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CURRENT SUPPORT MEMORANDUM

FIGHTER AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION IN THE USSR

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

This report represents the immediate views of the
originating intelligence components of the Office
of Research and Reports. Comments are solicited.

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FIGHTER AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION IN THE USSR

At the beginning of 1954 the Soviet fighter establishment, composed of Falcons (MIG-15's) and Frescos (MIG-17's), needed an all-weather interceptor. In addition, it needed an improved fighter interceptor to keep pace with Western development and production of fighters and bombers, especially the U.S. F-100, B-47, and B-52, and the U.K. Canberra. By the end of 1954 it appeared fairly certain that the Soviets had an all-weather, interceptor in operational units and that, in addition, other change-overs were being made in factories producing fighters. Production of MIDGET (U-MIG-15) trainers probably has risen--three USSR factories and one Czechoslovakian factory-complex were producing them in 1954. Employment of Falcons in a secondary role as ground attack aircraft continued through 1954.

Despite a continuing importance of MIG models in the aviation industry, the past year was noteworthy for the decrease in "MIG-orientation" compared with former years. Factories at Kuybyshev and Saratov have apparently dropped MIG production completely and the factory at Komsomolsk has taken up helicopter production in addition to MIG production. To some extent this apparent slack in Soviet production of MIG fighters is being taken up by Satellite production of MIG fighters.

Another indication of an all-weather fighter has been the very numerous reported sightings of twin-jet swept-wing aircraft in East Germany and the USSR.^{3/} In the main these reports describe the aircraft as similar to the Type 17 of Soviet Air Shows and about 1/3rd larger than the Falcon/MIG-15. Lack of confirmation of these sightings is beginning to cast doubt upon their reliability, however. In spite of their large number, the reports could be erroneous, stemming perhaps from the fact that a Fresco/MIG-17 equipped with wing tanks has somewhat the appearance of a twin-jet fighter.

Further evidence of one or more new fighter types in Soviet units in the Satellites appeared when an aircraft, believed to be designated either the IA-23 or the IL-23,* was scheduled from airfields in East Germany during the period from early August through mid-September 1954.^{4/} Either designation denotes a fighter rather than a bomber aircraft. (The USSR uses odd numbers to designate fighters and even to designate bombers.)

The new all-weather fighter may be produced by factory #292 in Saratov. A change in production occurred at Saratov in 1954. This factory, which had been producing the Falcon/MIG-15 and parts for the MIDGET/U-MIG-15, began in late December 1953 to borrow engineers and technical personnel from other plants in the fighter program.^{5/} These engineers were either to help prepare production of a new article at #292 or to observe new production at #292. Further evidence that a new article was actually being produced at #292 was

^{1/} Lavochkin is a fighter designer who has been overshadowed by Mikoyan in recent years and Ilyushin is the successful designer of the Butcher/IL-28 twin engine light jet bomber.

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[] Furthermore, there has been no connection between factory [] and the new MIG SP and/or the new MIG SF (see below), so it is hardly likely that the new article at [] is a MIG type. Thus, it is probable that a completely new fighter is being produced by the plant. To date the only new non-MIG fighters known or suspected to be in operation would be the "twin-jet fighter" and the LA-23 or IL-23.

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If the all-weather fighter known [] not the supposedly observed twin jet swept wing aircraft or the "LA-23" or the "IL-23", it may be a new or modified MIG fighter. Whether the new developments occurring in the MIG complex relate to an all-weather interceptor*, a new fighter, or a ground attack aircraft, and whether these developments pertain to more than one such model is unknown. Two apparently new production variants of the basic MIG design appeared during 1954 [] Komsomolsk and Novosibirsk factories. The first variant is known as "Article

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In addition to the Soviet production of U-MIG-15's the major European Satellite aircraft producing complex at Prague, Czechoslovakia began producing them in September 1954. This represents an apparent increase in jet trainer production in the Soviet Orbit, possibly stemming from an increased need for these aircraft in the European Satellites and Communist China.

The possibility should be considered that Article ST could be converted into an all-weather interceptor to fill the gap temporarily until a more suitable weapon is developed. The MIDGET/U-MIG-15 two-place aircraft could be converted into an all-weather fighter in much the same manner as the US F-94 was an outgrowth of the F-80.

Turning now to the subject of a new ground attack aircraft, there is evidence from East Germany that the USSR is using the Falcon/MIG-15 as at least an interim attack plane. Falcon/MIG-15's apparently equipped with rockets were observed in early 1953, 20/ and during December 1953 and January

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1954 Falcon/MIG-15's were observed practicing diving attacks in East Germany.
21/ A fairly steady stream of reports were received during 1953 and 1954
linking the Falcon/MIG-15 with flying activity indicating employment of the
aircraft in an attack role.22/

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